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RESEARCH REPORT

Profiling Escapes from Federal Custody 2011/2012 – 2016/2017

2018 Nº R-407

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Profiling Escapes from Federal Custody 2011/2012 – 2016/2017

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June 2018

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Jennifer Grindon, Terri Scott, Nezifa Hussen and Colette Cousineau for methodological and administrative support. We would also like to thank J. Johnson and L. Motiuk for their role in completing the earlier study on unlawful escapes[1] from custody that forms the basis of the current study.

[1] The term "escape" is used to refer to unlawful departures in the current report; earlier reports used the term "walkaway".

Executive Summary

Key words: *escapes from custody; institutional security; misconduct*

Escapes from custody present a challenge for correctional services, yet are under-examined across jurisdictions (Peterson, Fera and Mellow, 2016). In Canada, escapes have gone largely unexamined since the 1990s, when Johnson and Motiuk (1992a, 1992b) conducted research on escapes from minimum security institutions. Attempting to fill this knowledge gap, this report presents the findings of a study examining escapes from Canadian federal correctional institutions that occurred in the last six years.

Between 2011/2012 and 2016/2017, there were 91 documented escapes from CSC institutions for which there was sufficient information to do analysis. During this period, the annual number of examined escapes fluctuated from a high of 24 in 2012/2013, to a low of 9 in 2016/2017. Escapes occurred at 26 different federal institutions across the five regions. However, a disproportionate number (42%) occurred in the Prairie region. The vast majority (97%) of examined escapes were from minimum security institutions and most (81%) involved the offender absconding from the institution on foot.

The characteristics of offenders who escaped from custody varied by region, however, overall, offenders tended to be male (97%), White (54%) or Indigenous (43%), serving their first federal sentence (71%), often for property-related offences (57%) and other non-violent offences (66%). Most (78%) escapes involved offenders under the age of 45, with offenders in the 25-34 age category being most likely to escape. Offenders who escaped also tended to be serving relatively short sentences (i.e., less than 4 years) and had arrived at the institution of escape relatively recently. Many had extensive criminal histories, often dating back to their youth.

Offenders who escaped also tended to have complex needs; for example, 88% had histories of substance abuse, 48% had mental health issues and 54% had not completed high school. Offender motivations for escape often could not be determined; however, the most commonly identified motivation, noted in 26% of cases, was to obtain contraband, usually tobacco.

Some of these findings are similar to those reported by Johnson and Motiuk (1992a) in their earlier study on escapes from Ontario institutions. However, important differences between the studies emerge when it comes to ethnicity, age, index offence and motivations for escape. More specifically, offenders in the current study were ethnically more diverse, older and were more likely to be serving sentences for violent offences. The motivation to obtain contraband is also uniquely found in the current study.

While most offenders in custody do not engage in escape-related behaviours, CSC is committed to learning from these incidents so that more effective and preventative measures can be developed. By identifying the circumstances under which escapes are most likely to occur, the profile of offenders who undertake escapes, and the factors that may contribute to the decision to escape, the findings presented in this report can assist in the development of more effective and preventative policies.

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Introduction

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has the mandate "to contribute to public safety by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure and humane control." Escapes from federal custody, though relatively few in number, present a challenge for correctional services. While the number of escapes from federal institutions has declined over the last 10 years (Correctional Service Canada, 2017), there remains a need to understand these incidents so that more effective preventative policies and measures can be developed.

The vast majority of escapes from CSC institutions occur in minimum security institutions. These institutions are designed with the goal of promoting the offender's gradual reintegration into society, and as such, have minimal restrictions on movement and often lack exterior barriers (e.g., walls or fences; Correctional Service Canada, 2013). While the minimum security environment can help facilitate a positive reintegration process, the absence of perimeter controls means that escapes are more easily executed.

There is limited up-to-date research on escapes, particularly in the Canadian context. Research findings from other jurisdictions suggest that escapes most often occur in minimum security settings, are opportunistic in nature, and typically do not involve violence (Culp, 2005; Kim & Mellow, 2015; Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, 2015; Peterson, Fera, &Mellow, 2016; United States Sentencing Commission, 2008). In a recent American study, Peterson, Fera and Mellow (2016) found that escapes tend to involve offenders who are male, young, White, charged with a drug or property offence, and serving a long sentence. They also found that many offenders escape in response to a significant event (e.g., an administrative sanction).

Escapes in Canada have gone largely unexamined since the early 1990s, when Johnson and Motiuk (1992a, 1992b) conducted research on escapes from minimum security institutions. Their research study examined 70 escapes that occurred in the Ontario region over a 15 month period from January 1, 1990 to April 15, 1991. They found that escapes were most likely to occur during the Spring and Summer months and from institutions with higher admission rates. The authors also found that most escapes were unplanned, lacked accomplices, and were motivated by family problems or issues with other offenders. In terms of the offenders who

escaped, they tended to be young, White, single, convicted of property offences, serving relatively short-sentences, and often had histories of institutional security incidents. When compared to a matched control group of offenders who did not abscond, escapes had both similarities and differences (Johnson and Motiuk 1992b). More specifically, no meaningful differences were observed in relation to race, marital status, violent offence history and federal sentence number. When it came to criminal records and institutional history, however, significant differences were observed; more specifically, escapes had more criminal convictions, were more likely to have convictions related to escape and/or being unlawfully at large, and had a greater number of institutional security incidents. Furthermore, offenders who absconded scored more poorly on the Custody Rating Scale and the Statistical Information on Recidivism scale relative to their non-escape counterparts.

The current research project is the first to systematically re-examine escapes from CSC institutions since Johnson and Motiuk's (1992a) study. The purpose of this research is to identify the circumstances under which escapes occur, the profile of offenders who engage in escape behaviours, and the factors that may contribute to an offender's decision to escape. The findings outlined in this report will contribute to an enhanced understanding of escape behaviours so that future incidents can be better prevented.

Method

For this report, all confirmed escapes from federal custody between 2011/2012 and 2016/2017 with sufficient detail for analysis were examined, resulting in a total of 91 cases.[2] An incident was identified as an escape – i.e. an unlawful departure from federal custody – when defined as such in a Board of Investigation (BOI) report, incident report and/or warden's situation report. Attempted escapes that were thwarted prior to the breach of institutional boundaries were not included. While escapes from all security levels were included, the vast majority (88 out of 91) took place in minimum security institutions. The variables analyzed include some of those examined by Johnson and Motiuk (1992a), as well as some that were different. Variables in the current study relate to:

1. Information about the escape (e.g. date, time, location, method, motivation) and capture (e.g. charges incurred)
2. The demographic and background characteristics of the offender (e.g. age, ethnicity, level of education); and
3. Relevant static and situational risk/need factors (e.g. criminal and institutional histories, family concerns)

In order to better understand the nature of escapes and circumstances surrounding them, information was extracted from different sources. In 78% (71) of cases, a Board of Investigation (BOI) had been completed and was available. BOIs detail the circumstances surrounding an escape and identify relevant events and factors leading up to it. Data was also extracted from situation reports, incident reports, warden's situation reports and the Offender Management System (OMS).[3] The data from these sources was manually coded and subsequently entered into a database using software. The database developed will be maintained for possible future research projects relating to escapes from custody.

Efforts were taken to limit the subjectivity and inconsistency common to file coding. A coding manual was developed and maintained which contained information regarding the

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[2] This number does not refer to the total number of escape incidents, but the total number of offenders who escaped custody (some incidents involved more than one offender).

[3] In cases where a BOI was not conducted, significant efforts were made to obtain information about the escape using the alternate data sources. However, this was not always possible and the sample reported may not contain every escape that occurred in the time period under consideration.

interpretation of variables. To begin the coding process, a number of practice cases were coded by different researchers as a group. Discussion of particular items led to the clarification of ambiguities and resolution of any interpretive inconsistencies. Following practice cases, researchers independently coded the remaining cases. However, ongoing discussion and dialogue enhanced the consistency of the coding process.

Data files were exported for analysis into a statistical software program. To determine which items could be used in the analysis, frequency tables were produced for all variables. For some variables, the absence of relevant information led to a high number of 'not indicated' responses. In cases where the number of 'not indicated' responses exceeded 25%, the variable was removed from analysis (e.g, the relationship status of the offender was not identified in 55% of cases; therefore, this variable was not included in the analysis). For items with sufficient responses, cross-tabulations were computed and, where applicable, regional and yearly variations were analyzed. Findings were also compared with those of Johnson and Motiuk's (1992a) study where possible.

It is important to note that because the number of escapes tends to be relatively low, it is difficult to discern whether regional and yearly variations are the result of genuine differences/changes, or rather, due to the magnified effect of minor fluctuations in numbers. In addition, comparisons to the findings of Johnson and Motiuk's (1992a) study are useful for understanding if and how the nature of escapes has changed, however, an important difference between these two studies is the population; Johnson and Motiuk's study examined escapes specifically in the Ontario region, whereas the current study examines escapes in all five regions. Therefore, the comparisons made throughout this report should be interpreted in light of these considerations.

Results

Between the fiscal years 2011/2012 and 2016/2017, there were 91 documented escapes from CSC institutions that were examined. Escapes occurred in 26 different federal institutions across the five regions. Institutions of escape were primarily men's minimum security prisons (71%) and men's healing lodges run by CSC or the community (24%). Only two escapes occurred from men's medium security prisons. Women were involved in only three escape incidents, one at a medium security unit, the other two at minimum security units. Over the 6 year period analyzed, the number of examined escapes fluctuated from a high of 24 in 2012/2013 to a low of 9 in 2016/2017. Escapes were highest in the Prairie region, where 42% of all escapes occurred. Escapes were particularly high in the Prairie region in 2015/2016, when 69% of escapes occurred in this region.

Table 1

Examined Escapes From Federal Custody by Region, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017

Region	Fiscal Year						*Total*
	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	
Atlantic	3	7	-	-	-	-	*10*
Ontario	2	2	2	4	1	2	*13*
Pacific	2	3	4	5	2	2	*18*
Prairie	6	8	4	5	11	4	*38*
Quebec	2	4	2	1	2	1	*12*
Total	*15*	*24*	*12*	*15*	*16*	*9*	*91*

Detailed Examination of Escapes from Federal Custody

Examined escapes from custody between 2011/2012 to 2016/2017 most often involved offenders departing on foot from the institution (81%). Escapes were most likely to have occurred on Sundays (24%), followed by Fridays (20%), and were least likely to occur on Saturdays (7%). Escapes occurred throughout the year, however they were most common between July and September, when 35% of escapes occurred. September was the most common month for escapes, when 14% of escapes took place, while February and March were the least common months, with 3% and 6% of escapes occurring in these months respectively. In general,

escapes tended to occur soon after the offender arrived to the institution of escape; more specifically, around 73% of escapes occurred within six months of transfer/admission.

In terms of the time of day, a majority of examined escapes (62%) occurred in the evening period, between 6:00 PM and midnight. Escapes were least likely to occur during the overnight and morning periods, between midnight and 6:00 AM (7%) and 6:00 AM to noon (8%). In a majority (55%) of cases, it was unclear if another party assisted the offender in escaping; however, in at least 44% of cases, an accomplice was present, most often another offender (32%).

Over the 6 year period analyzed, Sunday and Friday were consistently the most common days for escapes except in the most recent fiscal year (2016/2017), during which time, Wednesday became the most common day for escapes. While the evening period was consistently the most common time for escapes in every fiscal year, the percentage of evening escapes appears to be decreasing. Evening escapes accounted for 60% of escapes in 2011/2012, and 75% in both 2012/2013 and 2013/2014, compared to 44% of escapes in 2016/2017.[4]

The most common day for escapes varied by region; escapes were most likely to occur on Fridays in the Atlantic region (60%), Wednesdays in Ontario (31%) and Quebec (42%), Thursdays in the Pacific region (28%) and Sundays in the Prairie region (29%). Similarly, there was variation in terms of the most common month for escapes; for example, August was most common in the Atlantic region (50%), while December was most common in the Ontario region (39%). Escapes were most common in the evening period in all regions except in Ontario, where the afternoon period was the most common time for escapes.

There was also regional variation when it came to the number of days between the date of admission to the institution of escape and the date of the escape. In general, offenders in the Prairie and Ontario regions tended to escape most quickly following admission. More specifically, the median[5] number of days between admission to the institution of escape and the escape was 60 days in the Prairie region and 66 days in the Ontario region. In contrast, the median number of days was 106 in the Atlantic region, 162 days in the Pacific region, and 177 days in the Quebec region.

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[4] Caution should be exercised when assessing the importance of yearly variation given small base numbers and the magnified effect of minor fluctuations on percentages.

[5] Significant variation in responses for this variable make the median rather than the mean (average) a more appropriate measure of central tendency.

These findings demonstrate both similarities and differences with those of Johnson and Motiuk's (1992a) earlier study in Ontario. As was found in the current study, Johnson and Motiuk found that the most common time for escapes was the summer (i.e. July to September). However, fall (i.e. October to December) escapes were rare in the earlier study (accounting for around 3% of cases), while somewhat common in the current study (accounting for 26% of cases). However, both studies found that escapes tended to occur relatively soon after transfer to minimum security. More specifically, Johnson and Motiuk found that escapes tend to occur, on average, 53 days following minimum security placement. In the current study, examined escapes tended to occur, on average, 168 days after placement to the institution of escape; however the median was a more accurate measure in this case and had a value of 77 days. Hence, escapes continue to occur relatively soon after transfer/admission.

Table 2

Information Related to Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Region

	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
Method of escape						
Escape from institution	10	10	15	30	9	*74 (81%)*
Other	-	-	-	2	2	*4 (4%)*
Unsure	-	3	3	6	1	*13 (14%)*
Day of week						
Sunday	2	3	4	11	2	*22 (24%)*
Monday	1	3	1	3	1	*9 (10%)*
Tuesday	-	-	3	7	2	*12 (13%)*
Wednesday	1	4	1	4	5	*15 (17%)*
Thursday	-	1	5	3	-	*9 (10%)*
Friday	6	1	3	7	1	*18 (20%)*
Saturday	-	1	1	3	1	*6 (7%)*
Time of day						
Morning (6 am - 12 pm)	-	-	3	4	-	7 (8%)
Afternoon (12 pm - 6 pm)	-	8	4	7	3	22 (24%)
Evening (6 pm - 12 am)	7	5	11	25	8	56 (62%)
Overnight (12 am - 6 am)	3	-	-	2	1	6 (7%)
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

Table 3

Information Related to Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Fiscal Year

	Fiscal Year						*Total*
	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	
Method of escape							
Escape from institution	13	17	10	12	16	6	*74 (81%)*
Other	-	1	2	-	-	1	*4 (4%)*
Unsure	2	6	-	3	-	2	*13 (14%)*
Day of week							
Sunday	4	5	3	6	4	-	*22 (24%)*
Monday	3	3	-	1	1	1	*9 (10%)*
Tuesday	2	3	-	3	3	1	*12 (13%)*
Wednesday	3	2	3	2	1	4	*15 (17%)*
Thursday	-	2	1	2	3	1	*9 (10%)*
Friday	3	8	4	1	1	1	*18 (20%)*
Saturday	-	1	1	-	3	1	*6 (7%)*
Time of day							
Morning (6 am - 12 pm)	1	1	1	-	1	3	7 (8%)
Afternoon (12 pm - 6 pm)	3	3	2	6	6	2	22 (24%)
Evening (6 pm - 12 am)	9	18	9	7	9	4	56 (62%)
Overnight (12 am - 6 am)	2	2	-	2	-	-	6 (7%)
Total number of escapes	*15*	*24*	*12*	*15*	*16*	*9*	*91*

Offenders' motivations for examined escapes were often unknown, however, the most common identified motivation, noted in 26% of cases, was to obtain contraband (usually tobacco). In most of these cases (21 of 24), it was noted that the offender had returned or planned to return to the institution. In 17% of cases, the offender was motivated by issues related to family or friends (e.g. a desire to see or check on a loved one). In 28% of cases, another motivation was noted; for example, a desire to avoid disciplinary action.

Motivations for escape varied across the fiscal years analyzed. Most notably, the desire to obtain contraband motivated 20% or less of escapes until 2013/2014, then increased to 53% in 2014/2015, and finally declined somewhat in the following two years (25% in 2015/2016 and 44% in 2016/2017). Issues relating to family and friends motivated 40% of escapes in 2011/2012

and 33% in 2016/2017, but comparatively less in the years in between (i.e. 13% in 2012/2014, 8% in 2013/2014, 0% in 2014/2015, and 13% in 2015/2016).[6]

Regional variation was noted in relation to offenders' motivations for escape. For example, escapes were most often motivated by a desire to obtain contraband in the Pacific region, noted in 44% of cases. In contrast, only 17% of escapes in the Quebec region were identified as being motivated by this objective. No cases in the Pacific region were identified as being motivated by issues relating to family/friends.

Overall, these findings suggest motivations for escapes may be different than those of the offenders observed in Johnson and Motiuk's Ontario study. In the earlier study, the authors found that the most common motivation for escape related to family problems, noted in 34% of cases. The second most common motivation for escape related to issues with other inmates, noted in 16% of cases. Other motivations included the inability to obtain a pass (11%), intoxication (11%) and boredom (11%). Interestingly, the desire to obtain contraband was not identified as a motivating factor in escapes in the earlier study, yet this motivation was the most commonly identified one in the current study.

Table 4

Motivation for Escape for Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Fiscal Year

Motivation[a]	Fiscal Year						*Total*
	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	
Family/friends	6	3	1	-	2	3	*15 (17%)*
Evade an institutional crisis[b]	-	-	-	-	1	-	*1 (1%)*
To obtain contraband and return to institution	2	4	1	8	3	3	*21 (23%)*
To obtain contraband, plans of return not known	1	-	-	-	1	1	*3 (3%)*
Other	-	7	6	5	6	1	*25 (28%)*
Unsure	6	11	4	2	4	2	*29 (32%)*
Total number of escapes	*15*	*24*	*12*	*15*	*16*	*9*	*91*

[a]In some cases, more than one motivation was noted; column totals may therefore exceed the total number of escapes.
[b]Examples: assault or gang-related issues.

[6] Caution should be exercised when assessing the importance of yearly variation given small base numbers and the magnified effect of minor fluctuations on percentages.

Table 5

Motivation for Escape for Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 2016/2017 by Region

Motivation[a]	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
Family/friends	2	3	-	8	2	*16 (17%)*
Evade institutional crisis[b]	-	-	-	1	-	*1 (1%)*
To obtain contraband and return to institution	2	4	8	7	-	*21 (23%)*
To obtain contraband, plans of return not known	1	-	-	-	2	*3 (3%)*
Other	4	3	3	11	4	*25 (28%)*
Unsure	2	3	7	13	4	*29 (32%)*
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

[a]In some cases, more than one motivation was noted; column totals may therefore exceed the total number of escapes.
[b]Examples: assault or gang-related issues.

All offenders in examined escapes from custody in the period under examination were eventually captured. In around 70% of cases, the offender was captured in 3 days or less (the median number of days spent at large was 2). Offenders were captured in diverse locations, including in nearby wooded areas or on roads, at the homes of friends or family members, and at the institution (in cases where the offender had returned).

Board of Investigations (BOIs), which investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident, were conducted in 78% of cases. There was some regional variation in terms of whether or not a BOI was conducted; for example, all 10 incidents in the Atlantic region were subject to a BOI, compared to 8 out of 13 (62%) incidents in the Ontario region.

Most (84%) offenders who escaped were criminally charged with escape/going unlawfully at large. In a smaller percentage of cases, offenders received additional criminal charges for offences that took place while at large, including property offences (noted in 13% of cases) and other non-violent offences (noted in 10% of cases). In all but one case, the offender was transferred to a higher security institution or unit following recapture.

There was some regional variation when it came to criminal charges incurred. Offenders in the Prairie and Ontario regions were most likely to receive charges for escaping custody/going

unlawfully at large; more specifically, 95% of those in the Prairie region, and 92% of those in the Ontario region, received such charges. In comparison, 56% of offenders in the Pacific region received such charges.

Table 6

Information Related to Recapture For Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Region

	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
Force used in apprehension	-	-	-	1	-	*1 (1%)*
Offender was transferred following escape	10	12	18	39	11	*90 (99%)*
BOI completed	10	8	14	29	10	*71 (78%)*
Offences while at large						
Property	3	1	1	6	1	*12 (13%)*
Assault	-	-	-	1	-	*1 (1%)*
Robbery	-	-	1	-	1	*2 (2%)*
Drug	-	1	-	2	-	*3 (3%)*
UAL	8	12	10	36	10	*76 (84%)*
Other violent	-	-	-	1	-	*1 (1%)*
Other non-violent	2	-	2	5	-	*9 (10%)*
None	1	-	5	1	-	*7 (8%)*
Not indicated	1	1	3	1	2	*8 (9%)*
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

Profile of Offenders Who Escaped from Federal Custody

Offenders in examined escapes from federal custody under the period analyzed tended to be male (97%) and White (54%) or Indigenous (43%). Most (78%) escapes involved offenders under the age of 45, with offenders in the 25-34 age category being most likely to escape. Just under three-quarters (71%) of offenders who escaped were serving their first federal sentence, while just under half were serving relatively short sentences (i.e. less than 4 years). Escapes were most common among relatively new offenders; 26% had served less than a year of their sentence. A majority (51%) of offenders had been classified as medium security at intake, however, nearly all (97%) were classified as minimum security offenders at the time of the escape.

Some variation in the demographic characteristics of offenders existed across fiscal years.

For example, the percentage of offenders who were White decreased from 60% in 2011/2012 to 33% in 2016/2017. Conversely, the percentage of offenders who were Indigenous increased from 33% in 2011/2012 to 67% in 2016/2016.[7]

In terms of regional variation, Indigenous offenders were over-represented in the Prairie and Pacific region, where they were involved in 68% and 50% of escapes respectively. White offenders accounted for the majority of escape incidents in the Atlantic (100%), Ontario (77%) and Quebec (67%) regions. Offenders in the Atlantic region tended to be somewhat younger; 90% were under the age of 35, while offenders in the Quebec region tended to be older; 42% were aged 45 or over. Those in the Atlantic region were the least likely to have served a previous federal sentence; more specifically, 90% were first-time federal offenders. In comparison, 56% of offenders in the Pacific region were first-time federal offenders. Those in the Quebec region were most likely to be serving indeterminate sentences (42%), while those in the Atlantic region were most likely to be serving relatively short sentences (i.e. less than four years).

When it comes to ethnicity and age, there are some notable differences between the findings of the current study and those of Johnson and Motiuk's Ontario study. In the earlier study, 97% of offenders who unlawfully departed were White, compared to 54% overall (77% in Ontario) in the current study, while and 3% were Indigenous, compared to 43% overall (8% in Ontario) in the current study. Examined escapes in the current study also appear to involve older offenders; in the earlier study, those under 30 accounted for approximately 76% of cases, compared to 34% overall in the current study (15% in Ontario). Both studies found that most offenders who escaped tend to be serving a relatively short sentence (i.e. less than four years).

[7] Caution should be exercised when assessing the importance of yearly variation given small base numbers and the magnified effect of minor fluctuations on percentages.

Table 7

Characteristics of Offenders in Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Fiscal Year

Characteristic	Fiscal Year						*Total*
	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	
Gender							
Male	15	23	12	14	16	8	*88 (97%)*
Female	-	1	-	1	-	1	*3 (3%)*
Ethnicity							
White	9	15	6	9	7	3	*49 (54%)*
Indigenous	5	8	6	6	8	6	*39 (43%)*
Black	1	-	-	-	-	-	*1 (1%)*
Other	-	1	-	-	1	-	*2 (2%)*
Age							
18-24	-	5	1	2	3	-	*11 (12%)*
25-34	7	10	4	2	6	5	*34 (37%)*
35-44	5	6	2	6	4	3	*26 (29%)*
45-54	2	2	2	3	3	-	*12 (13%)*
55-64	1	1	2	2	-	1	*7 (8%)*
65-74	-	-	1	-	-	-	*1 (1%)*
Sentence length							
Less than 4 years	8	14	3	6	6	4	*41 (45%)*
4 years to 6 years less a day	1	4	1	2	3	2	*13 (14%)*
6 years to 10 years less a day	2	4	2	1	2	-	*11 (12%)*
10 years or more	2	1	1	-	4	1	*9 (10%)*
Indeterminate	2	1	5	6	1	2	*17 (19%)*
Time served							
Less than 1 year	5	9	1	3	3	3	*24 (26%)*
1 year to 2 years less a day	2	9	3	2	3	1	*20 (22%)*
2 years to 5 years less a day	3	4	2	4	5	2	*20 (22%)*
5 years to 10 years less a day	3	-	-	1	3	2	*9 (10%)*
10 years to 20 years less a day	1	1	3	4	1	-	*10 (11%)*
20 years +	1	1	3	1	1	1	*8 (9%)*
Security level at time of escape							
Minimum	15	24	11	15	15	8	*88 (97%)*
Medium	-	-	1	-	1	1	*3 (3%)*
Total number of escapes	*15*	*24*	*12*	*15*	*16*	*9*	*91*

Table 8

Characteristics of Offenders in Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, 2011-2012 2016/2017 by Region

Characteristic	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
Gender						
Male	10	13	18	36	11	*88 (97%)*
Female	-	-	-	2	1	*3 (3%)*
Ethnicity						
White	10	10	9	12	8	*49 (54%)*
Indigenous	-	1	9	26	3	*39 (43%)*
Black	-	1	-	-	-	*1 (1%)*
Other	-	1	-	-	1	*2 (2%)*
Age						
18-24	3	-	-	8	0	*11 (12%)*
25-34	6	2	8	14	4	*34 (37%)*
35-44	1	7	5	10	3	*26 (29%)*
45-54	-	3	2	4	3	*12 (13%)*
55-64	-	-	3	2	2	*7 (8%)*
65-74	-	1	-	-	-	*1 (1%)*
Sentence length						
Less than 4 years	7	7	6	18	3	*41 (45%)*
4 years to 6 years less a day	3	3	1	6	-	*13 (14%)*
6 years to 10 years less a day	-	-	2	7	2	*11 (12%)*
10 years or more	-	1	3	3	2	*9 (10%)*
Indeterminate	-	2	6	4	5	*17 (19%)*
Time served						
Less than 1 year	5	3	1	12	3	*24 (26%)*
1 year to 2 years less a day	4	4	4	7	1	*20 (22%)*
2 years to 5 years less a day	1	3	5	10	1	*20 (22%)*
5 years to 10 years less a day	-	1	3	4	1	*9 (10%)*
10 years to 20 years less a day	-	1	1	4	4	*10 (11%)*
20 years +	-	1	4	1	2	*8 (9%)*
Security level at time of escape						
Minimum	10	13	18	37	10	*88 (97%)*
Medium	-	-	-	1	2	*3 (3%)*
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

Detailed Characteristics of Offenders Who Escaped from Federal Custody

The prevalence of certain characteristics among offenders in examined escapes from custody suggests they are a group with complex needs. For example, a history of substance misuse was noted in 88% cases, while a mental health disorder was noted in just under a half of cases. A majority (54%) of offenders had not completed high school.

In terms of regional variation, a history of substance misuse was most common in the Atlantic region, where all 10 offenders who escaped were identified as having substance misuse issues. Mental health issues were most common to offenders in the Quebec region, where 67% had an identified mental health disorder. Education level was lowest in the Prairie region, where 74% of offenders had less than a high school education, and highest in the Ontario region, where only 15% of offenders had less than a high school education.

In their earlier study in Ontario, Johnson and Motiuk also found that offenders who unlawfully departed from custody tended to be a high risk/needs group. For example, they found that around 54% had alcohol misuse issues, 56% had indicators of drug misuse, and 44% experienced heavy addiction. They also found that nearly 90% of offenders who absconded had not completed high school; this figure is now smaller both in Ontario (15%) and overall (54%).

Table 9

Detailed Characteristics of Offenders in Examined Escapes from Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017

Characteristic	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
History of substance abuse	10	8	16	35	11	*80 (88%)*
Had a mental health disorder	4	7	9	16	8	*44 (48%)*
Level of education						
Less than high school	6	2	7	28	6	*49 (54%)*
High school or equivalence	1	6	7	6	1	*21 (23%)*
Some post-secondary education	-	2	2	2	1	*7 (8%)*
Vocational training	-	1	-	1	2	*4 (4%)*
Post-secondary degree	-	1	1	-	1	*3 (3%)*
Not indicated	3	1	1	1	1	*7 (8%)*
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

Extensive criminal histories were also common to offenders who escaped from custody in the period under current examination. For example, 63% of offenders had criminal records

dating back to their youth. About half had over 20 adult criminal convictions, while around 20% had over 50 adult convictions. Index offences common among offenders included property offences (57%) and other non-violent offences (66%). Around a quarter were serving time for homicide (28%), robbery (25%), and other violent offences (25%). In terms of past adult offences, property (65%), assault (50%) and other non-violent offences (74%) were common, while just over one-third (36%) of offenders had previous drug charges.

In terms of regional variation, a history of juvenile offending was most common among offenders in the Prairie and Pacific regions, where 76% and 72% respectively had a youth criminal record. Those in the Pacific region were most likely to have extensive offending histories; for example, 39% had over 50 adult convictions. There was also regional variation in relation to the nature of criminal convictions. For past convictions, those in the Quebec region were most likely to have robbery convictions (58%), while those in the Pacific were most likely to have drug convictions (56%). For current offences, offenders in the Atlantic region were most likely to be serving time for property offences (90%) and other non-violent offences (100%), while offenders in the Quebec region were most likely to be serving time for homicide (50%) and drug offences (42%).

Extensive criminal histories were, in some ways, more pronounced in Johnson and Motiuk's study. For example, they found that all (100%) offenders who absconded had youth criminal records (compared to 63% overall and 46% in Ontario in the current study) and 65% had over 20 criminal convictions (compared to 51% overall and 54% in Ontario in the current study). However, the offenders in the earlier study may have been less violent; the most common index offence among offenders was property-related, identified in around 60% of cases, while those serving time for violent offences (including homicide-related offences, robbery and assault) accounted for around 30% of cases. In the current study, property and other non-violent offences were common, however, more offenders were serving time for violent offences in comparison to the earlier study, including homicide (28% overall, 15% in Ontario), assault (21% overall, 8% in Ontario) and other violent offences (25% overall and 15% in Ontario). As in the earlier study, robbery was an index offence in one-quarter of cases (15% in Ontario).

Table 10

Factors Related to Criminal History for Offenders in Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017

Factors tied to criminal history	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
History of juvenile offending	5	6	13	29	4	57 (63%)
Number of adult convictions						
1 - 5	1	3	1	6	2	*13 (14%)*
6 - 10	2	1	2	11	2	*18 (20%)*
11 - 20	2	2	5	5	-	*14 (15%)*
21 - 30	2	2	3	3	3	*13 (14%)*
31 - 40	1	-	-	5	2	*8 (9%)*
41 - 50	-	2	-	4	1	*7 (8%)*
Over 50	2	3	7	4	2	*18 (20%)*
Adult offence history						
Property	7	10	15	21	6	*59 (65%)*
Homicide	-	-	-	1	-	*1(1%)*
Assault	2	6	10	22	5	*45 (50%)*
Robbery	-	2	5	6	7	*20 (22%)*
Drug	3	4	10	10	6	*33 (36%)*
Other violent	3	4	9	9	3	*28 (31%)*
Other non-violent	6	9	13	31	8	*67 (74%)*
None	2	2	1	3	2	*10 (11%)*
Index offence(s)						
Property	9	9	8	17	9	*52 (57%)*
Homicide	-	2	7	10	6	*25 (28%)*
Assault	3	1	4	9	2	*19 (21%)*
Robbery	1	2	8	7	5	*23 (25%)*
Drug	4	2	2	6	5	*19 (21%)*
Other violent	1	2	5	1	4	*23 (25%)*
Other non-violent	10	8	11	23	8	*60 (66%)*
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

Among offenders who escaped from custody between 2011/2012 to 2015/2016, some commonalities were noted in relation to their institutional histories. For example, the vast majority of offenders (92%) had participated in and completed institutional programming, while many (80%) had held an institutional job prior to escape. When it came to the number of institutional charges/incidents, a majority (65%) had 10 or less (median = 5).

In terms of regional variation, offenders in the Ontario region were least likely to have participated in and completed programming (69%), while those in the Atlantic region were the least likely to have held an institutional job prior to the escape (50%).

Table 11

Factors Related to Institutional History for Offenders in Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017

Institutional Factor/Event	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
Completed institutional programming	10	9	18	37	10	*84 (92%)*
Held institutional job	5	8	17	31	12	*73 (80%)*
Number of institutional incidents						
None	1	4	-	4	-	*9 (10%)*
1 - 10	8	6	7	23	6	*50 (55%)*
11 - 25	1	2	7	7	3	*20 (22%)*
26 - 50	-	1	3	1	2	*7 (8%)*
Over 50	-	-	1	3	1	5 (6%)
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

Precipitants are factors or incidents that may have contributed to an offender's decision to escape. In just under one-quarter of examined cases (24%), an institutional incident that may have caused the offender stress (e.g. staff discovery of contraband) occurred in close proximity to the escape. In 25% of cases, the offender was experiencing (or had recently experienced) problems related to the institutional environment (e.g. conflict with other inmates, difficulty adhering to correctional planning) and/or their sentence (e.g. suspension of a temporary absence). In 19% of cases, the offender was experiencing martial or family conflict concerns.

Regional variation emerged when it came to certain precipitants. For example, precipitating institutional incidents were most common to escapes in the Atlantic region, noted in 60% of cases. The presence of marital or family conflict or concerns was somewhat higher in the Ontario region, noted in 31% of cases. Having access to a communication device was most common in the Quebec and Prairie regions (noted in 25% and 18% of cases respectively), while not apparent or relatively uncommon in all other regions. The presence of personal issues relating to the institutional environment or one's sentence was most common in the Quebec region, noted in 42% of cases.

Table 12

Precipitators in Relation to Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Region

Precipitating factor/incident	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
Overall health concerns	-	-	3	2	1	*6 (7%)*
Informed someone of desire/plan to escape	-	1	3	3	2	*9 (10%)*
Delayed/denied conditional release or parole	-	1	2	3	2	*8 (9%)*
Stopped participation in programs	-	-	3	2	-	*5 (6%)*
Denied visitors	-	1	-	2	-	*3(3%)*
Marital or family conflict concerns	1	4	2	8	2	*17 (19%)*
Increase in security level	-	-	-	1	-	*1 (1%)*
Access to a communication device	-	-	2	7	3	*12 (13%)*
Outstanding debts in the community	-	1	2	2	-	*5 (6%)*
Death of a family member	-	1	-	1	-	*2 (2%)*
Institutional incident (e.g. staff discovery of contraband)	6	2	2	10	2	*22 (24%)*
Urinalysis test recently administered	1	-	2	3	1	*7 (8%)*
Issues related to institutional environment or sentence	1	1	7	9	5	*23 (25%)*
Not indicated	3	3	5	8	3	*22 (24%)*
None identified	1	-	1	1	-	*3 (3%)*
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

Certain risk factors were common to offenders in examined escapes from custody. Perhaps most notably, 50% of offenders had previous charges related to escape or being unlawfully at large (UAL). In addition, 78% had a history of conditional release breaches and/or failure-related charges (e.g. failure to comply with conditions or failure to attend court), while 47% had criminal associates. Across fiscal years, the number of offenders with a history of breach-related charges increased from 67% in 2011/2012 to 100% in 2016/2017.[8]

In terms of regional variation, offenders in the Pacific region were most likely to have a history of escape or being unlawfully at large, noted in 67% of cases, as well as past compliance issues with case management, noted in 33% of cases. A history of breaches and the presence of criminal associates were most likely in the Prairie region, identified in 84% and 58% of cases respectively. Both of these factors were lowest in the Quebec region.

[8] Caution should be exercised when assessing the importance of yearly variation given small base numbers and magnified effect of minor fluctuations.

Johnson and Motiuk's study considered some of these same variables and found similar results; for example, around 44% of offenders in their study had histories of going UAL and 71% had criminal associates (compared to 47% overall 46% in Ontario in the current study). While history of conditional release breaches and failure-related charges was not a variable in the earlier study, the authors did note that 63% of offenders had committed their index offence while on bail or under supervision, indicating a history of legal incompliance.

Table 13

Risk factors Present Among Offenders in Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Region

Risk Factor	Region					*Total*
	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific	Prairie	Quebec	
History of UAL/Escape related charges	2	6	12	18	7	*45 (50%)*
History of breach-related charges	8	8	15	32	8	*71 (78%)*
Compliance issues with case management team[a]	1	2	6	5	1	*(15) 17%*
Criminal associates	4	6	9	22	2	*43 (47%)*
Other	2	4	4	5	3	*18 (20%)*
None identified	-	2	-	-	-	*2 (2%)*
Total number of escapes	*10*	*13*	*18*	*38*	*12*	*91*

[a] For example, stopped taking medication or going to programming.

Table 14

Risk factors Present Among Offenders in Examined Escapes From Federal Custody, Fiscal Years 2011-2012 – 2016/2017 by Fiscal Year

Risk Factor	Fiscal Year						Total
	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	
History of UAL/Escape related charges	5	11	10	7	8	3	*45 (50%)*
History of breach-related charges	10	16	10	12	14	9	*71 (78%)*
Compliance issues with case management team[a]	3	2	1	5	3	1	*15 (17%)*
Criminal associates	5	9	6	7	9	7	*43 (47%)*
Other	2	*2*	*3*	*5*	*6*	-	18 (20%)
None identified	-	*1*	*1*	-	-	-	2 (2%)
Total number of escapes	15	*24*	*12*	*15*	*16*	*9*	*91*

[a] For example, stopped taking medication or going to programming.

Conclusion

This report is the first to systematically analyze escapes from CSC institutions since Johnson and Motiuk's (1992a) research on escapes from minimum security institutions. The report provided an overview of escapes from CSC facilities between 2011/2012 and 2016/2017 where sufficient information was available for analysis. The report looked specifically at the circumstances under which escapes occur, the profile of offenders who undertake escapes, and the factors that may contribute to an offender's decision to escape. The findings outlined in this report will contribute to a better understanding of escape behaviours so that more effective and preventative policies and measures can be developed.

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